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Gateway Program: Perceptions of the second year student

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Eastern Illinois University

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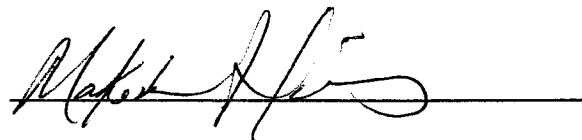
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Gateway Program: Perceptions of the Second Year Student
(Title)

By

MaKesha Harris

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN COLLEGE STUDENT AFFAIRS

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2007
YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

May 10, 2007
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Gateway Program: Perceptions of the Second Year Student

By

MaKesha Harris

Spring 2007

A Thesis

Submitted to

Eastern Illinois University

In partial fulfillment of the requirement

For the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN COLLEGE STUDENT AFFAIRS
Department of Counseling and Student Development in the Graduate School
Eastern Illinois University

We recommend that this thesis be accepted as fulfilling part of the requirements for the
Graduate degree cited above.


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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated, first and foremost to my parents, Willie and Mary Harris. Thank you for instilling in me the importance of valuing and being committed to my education. I dedicate this to you out of love and the highest respect a daughter can have for her parents.

Secondly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my dearest friend and soon to be husband, Mr. Cortez Hodges. Without your love, encouragement, friendship, loyalty, and presence this accomplishment would not be complete. Thank you for being my coach when I needed some tough love and my cheerleader when I excelled!

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to understand the perception of sophomore students who were successfully released from the Gateway Program and are now progressing through their college careers at Eastern Illinois University. They are doing so without the extra resources and intrusive assistance of first year Gateway advisors and support services during their sophomore year. The primary investigator conducted one on one interviews with a selected sample of former Gateway students using qualitative methods (Lincoln & Guba 1985) regarding their relationship with their Gateway advisor and their second year academic advisor and campus resources. Interview findings were triangulated and themes and issues identified. Results showed that former Gateway students desired to continue to have their advisor use intrusive advising techniques. Also these students are not using campus resources during their second year because it is not a requirement. However, they need the extra guidance in order to be pushed to seek out additional resources outside of their academic advisor.

The results are followed by a discussion of the research questions based on a comparison of the responses from former Gateway students. Recommendations for student affairs practitioners and future researchers to assist former Gateway students in their pursuit of a bachelor's degree are included.

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Gateway Program: Perceptions of the Second Year Student

Chapter I

Introduction

Much attention is given to first- year experience programs for new, first time college students in American higher education (Bourne- Bowie, 2000). From orientations and first year seminars to learning communities and intrusive advising, new, first time college students have a significant amount of institutional support made available to them. When the students enter their sophomore year in college, they are no longer considered to be the “newbies” of the university who need a substantial amount of support and attention (Hunter, 2006). By the sophomore year students are thought of as being able to become independent individuals. Common practice at most institutions of higher education is to allow sophomore students to proceed through college on their own and establish a sense of responsibility for themselves and their educational success (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006).

In recent years, a growing interest about the second year experience has focused on two primary topics: (1) The developmental changes that take place within students during their sophomore year and (2) institutional policies and support from administrators that help or hinder students during their second year (Hunter, 2006). Lipka (2006, pg 34) stated that sophomore students are becoming known as “higher education’s middle children”. Gahagan and Hunter (2006) described these students as the “silent ones”. They are the students who are changing their academic majors, have feelings of confusion and are overwhelmed because of the loss of personal connection along with having their minds focused on financial and emotional burdens. According to Hunter, choosing a major or questioning parental values, and searching for meaning and closeness to other students become more important as students enter their second

year. The sophomore year is a time of developmental growth and a period when academic advising and course selection become more important as sophomores are asked to declare their academic majors. One student described the sophomore year as, "the transition between wide-eyed awe and upper-class confidence" (Coburn and Treeger 1997, p. 274).

In the middle of that transition there is the "sophomore slump". It is a time where the sophomore student is no longer in awe and their level of confidence in their academic and personal development is at a low point (Coburn and Treeger, 1997).

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of the present study was to understand the perception of sophomore students who were successfully released from the Gateway Program and are now progressing through their college careers at Eastern Illinois University without the extra resources and intrusive assistance of first year Gateway advisors and associated support services during their sophomore year. Winslow (2006) believed that it is usually during the sophomore year that students are confronted with life's biggest decisions. The focus of this study was to examine how the Gateway Program's personalized attention and support services helped to prepare its underrepresented and disadvantaged freshmen students for their personal and academic developmental changes that occur during the sophomore year.

Statement of the Problem

Lipka (2006) found that the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, which collects data for 440 four-year institutions, reported that while 80.6 percent of freshmen who enrolled in college in 2003 came back as sophomores the following year, only 70.7 percent of those students were still enrolled at their original institutions as juniors two years later. Lipka also mentioned that the research by the US Department of Education has shown that among all

students who drop out of college, about two thirds as many do so in their second year as in their first year.

As the level of independence and personal responsibility for the sophomore student increases, the development of programs specifically for sophomore retention, until recently, did not exist or rarely existed (Lipka, 2006). Students who complete the Gateway Program at EIU are faced with an increase of personal responsibility. It is the hope of the researcher that the information gathered in the present study would serve as a source of information for Eastern Illinois University Gateway Program staff along with the Eastern Illinois University Academic and Student Affairs Offices to increase sophomore student retention.

Research Question

Is the Gateway Program effective in developing its freshmen students in a manner that would help them to persevere on their own successfully in college as sophomores after being released from the program? This study is an attempt to identify characteristics and broaden the knowledge base regarding second-year students who were admitted to Eastern Illinois University in the Fall semester of 2004 through the Gateway Program. For example, what factors such as parental support or the presence of strong mentors assisted the students in furthering their education? What issues do Gateway students face during their second year experience? The successful transition from first year to second year is the focus of this study.

Operational Definitions

The following terms provide operational definitions for the purposes of this study.

- Academic Advisement: the process of developing educational plans which clarify career and life goals via the development of a clear understanding of appropriate

courses, as well as a proper interpretation of institutional requirements for successful degree completion (Grites, as cited in Frost, 2000).

- Academically disadvantaged: refers to students who present credentials indicating high school grade point averages, college entrance exam scores and class ranks which do not meet regular admission standards (Robinson, 2006).
- Alternative/provisional admission programs: Admissions procedure and schedule of coursework designed to enable those who would not otherwise meet the standards of a given college or university to attend that institution (Needle, 1991).
- Gateway Program: a selective, highly structured program designed for student with an inability to meet regular Eastern Illinois University admission requirements. Participants are to participate in year-long intrusive advisement, mentoring, and tutoring programs. (Robinson, 2006).
- Sophomore year experience: “first-time full-time students who have persisted into their second year of academic work” (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006, p. 18).

Overview of the Study

The present thesis presents, in five chapters, findings regarding the second year experience of students who were part of EIU’s Gateway Program as freshmen during the 2004-05 academic year. Chapter I provides an introduction to the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research question that guided the study. Chapter II contains a review of previous studies about the first year and second year experiences. More specifically, areas covered in the literature review regarding the second year experience include the history of the Gateway Program, the freshman-institution relationship, the sophomore-institution relationship, and sophomore attrition. Chapter III contains the research methodology, a description of the

processes used to identify participants, interview questions, and data analysis procedures.

Chapter IV presents the research findings; Chapter V contains an analysis of the findings, conclusions, recommendations for student affairs practitioners and recommendations for future research.

Chapter II

Review of Related Literature

The Gateway Program

According to Heisserer and Paretter (2002), at-risk students generally fall into five categories that are similar to the requirements for being admitted into the Gateway Program. They include being disabled, ethnic minority, academically disadvantaged, low socio-economic status and/or academically probationary students.

At many colleges and universities provisional/alternative programs are open to students who have a record of academic difficulty that can be attributed to a number of factors. These factors include family issues, financial issues and the lack of preparation or knowledge of how to be academically successful in order to be accepted into the desired college (Heisserer and Paretter, 2002). In 1990, the Office of Minority Affairs at Eastern Illinois University originated the Gateway Program, which is a provisional admission program for incoming, first-time freshmen students who do not meet the regular admission requirements. The program is not open to transfer or non-traditional students. It is specifically designed to provide educational and some personal assistance to underrepresented, academically disadvantaged, traditional age students. There were a total of 127 students admitted to Eastern Illinois University through the Gateway Program in the Fall of 2004.

The Gateway program provides students an alternate route to enrollment at Eastern Illinois University. The Gateway Program at Eastern Illinois University includes intrusive academic advisement, mandatory workshops and classes designed to help students access academic and financial assistance aid along with developing both their social capital and cultural awareness. Once admitted to Eastern Illinois University through the Gateway Program,

academically disadvantaged students along with their parent or legal guardian are required to sign a participant agreement form which states that they understand and will abide by the rules of the program. The students are also required to sign an authorization to exchange or request information which allows Gateway advisors to exchange information with the student's instructors as well as their parents or legal guardians. It is also used as a legal documentation to supersede the regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. The staff has an open door policy with the parents of the students and they work together as a team in order to help the students' progress toward becoming successful graduates of Eastern (Gateway Staff, 2004).

The Gateway Program consists of two consecutive semesters where the students are to maintain a GPA of a 2.0 within both semesters. If the student fails to meet the requirements they are to remain in the Gateway Program for an additional semester or are released upon the discretion of the Gateway Program Coordinator and the Director of Minority Affairs. During the first semester students are required to enroll in and successfully complete University Foundation 1111. Students who receive a low score on their reading examination are required to enroll in and complete General Studies 1000. The former course is a general introduction to university life, and the latter course focuses on the development of academic and study skills needed for success in college (Eastern Illinois University, 2005). During the second semester all students are required to complete the General Studies 1100 course. The GST 1100 course is a general introduction to career choices and development (Eastern Illinois University, 2005). The Gateway Staff (2004) identified all of these aspects of a provisional/ alternative admission program to be areas of influence that help students make a successful transition into college.

Gateway Advisors

In fall of 2004 the Gateway staff consisted of four full-time advisors, three graduate assistants, one secretary and two student workers all under the supervision of the Office of Minority Affairs. Each graduate staff member advised an average of 15 students per semester. The fulltime advisors were assigned an average of 35-40 students per semester. Gateway students were required to meet with their advisors on a weekly basis.

The Gateway advisors play a broader role in the lives of their students than the advisors of Eastern students who have enrolled through regular admission. The staff of the Gateway Program plays the role of “parents away from home” for many of the students. The Gateway advisors work with the students on a one-on-one weekly basis inside and out of the office, both during and after work hours. These advisors have to effectively assist students in the program and help them learn how to become successful academically as well as personally. These advisors were specially trained to work with students who entered the University and were at risk of experiencing academic difficulty in the completion of a degree. Gateway advisors follow strict guidelines that aid in student success. Gateway Program advisors also engage in continuous monitoring of their advisees’ involvement in the co-curriculum, encourage their participation in workshops designed to enhance their skills and knowledge, serve as liaison to university departments, be available to provide students who need assistance with personal and social concerns, and serve as advocates for students needing specific academic support services.

Freshman- Institution Relationship

Freshmen students have a challenge connecting with the institution according to Gruanke and Woosley (2005). “The transition from high school to college is a time of great challenges and changes for a student” (Hicks, 2005, p. 19). “First-year students enter college with

aspirations of being successful, but they simultaneously sense loss of family ties and experience a dramatic alteration of their everyday lives...they want to be totally independent while at the same time they want someone, often the academic advisor, to tell them exactly what to do” (Smith, 2000 p. 39).

According to Van (2002), most first generation students are intimidated by four-year universities, such as Eastern, and opt to choose two-year institutions. They are intimidated because most of them believe that their academic preparation is not sufficient to gain them admission to or be successful at a four-year institution. Students look for extra guidance and resources once they arrive on campus because they have doubts about their ability to survive in college. In their minds, the knowledge and the resources they have are not enough to make them feel secure about being college students so they go to their advisors for that sense of security.

Colleges and universities utilize their advisors and their advising methods in academic advising centers which primarily focus on providing freshmen students with guidance regarding degree requirements and course selection options. Most of these needs are addressed by using the one-on-one method of advisement. According to Nutt (2000), often the “one-on-one relationship between the student and advisor is the only opportunity a student has to build a personal link with the institution; it thereby has a profound effect on the students’ academic career and on the student’s satisfaction with the institution” (p. 220).

Sophomore Student- Institution Relationship

Sophomore students are focused on their academic work and their interactions with their peers and professors but above all, their challenge is being able to connect with a profession or discipline (Gruanke & Woosley, 2005). By the beginning of the sophomore year, the students enter what some researchers refer to as the “sophomore slump” (Freedman, 1959, p. 22). Furr &

Gannaway (1982) described the sophomore slump as being a period of “confusion and uncertainty” (p 340). Lemons and Richmond (1987) reinforced this idea by stating that the components of the sophomore slump also include doubts about career, dissatisfaction in relationships, and an increased concern about paying for college. According to Hunter (2006) dissatisfaction and the lack of institutional support has been associated with the second-year experience. Feldman and Newcomb (1969) revealed that sophomores are more likely to be dissatisfied with their college experience than first year, junior, and senior students. Morgan and Davis (1981) found that there are few programs available through student affairs divisions that are targeted at second-year students. As the “middle child”, the lack of awareness of these students by the institution resulted in them feeling “alone on campus” (p. 170).

Sophomore Student- Faculty Relationship

One major factor that makes a difference in sophomore students' grade point averages is if they have satisfying interactions with faculty (Graunke & Woosley, 2005). “Research indicates that the faculty/student relationships affect student satisfaction with college, academic achievement and retention” (Guiffrida, 2005, p.701).

Graunke and Woosley (2005), have reported that their research indicates that sophomores in general are not satisfied with the interaction they have with faculty. This research is especially prominent in the minority students who attend predominantly white institutions and feel they have less institutional support, especially from the faculty, than other students. These students find it very difficult developing positive relationships with white faculty. Guiffrida's research indicates that some minority students often perceive faculty at predominantly white institutions as culturally insensitive.

Sophomore Student- Student Affairs Relationship

In the last few years across the nation, college student affairs professionals have been implementing programs that target sophomore students so that they don't feel alone and they may gain a sense of belonging to the family of the institution. Some student development models are used as tools by student affairs professionals in order to guide students and "potentially affect all students' academic development, social adjustment and success" (Bourne-Bowie, 2000, p. 36).

However, a majority of the models being used are older models that were created and based on Eurocentric world views. The need for retention among the minority students "requires that student-affairs professionals work together with academic affairs to develop, implement and refine new, more culturally inclusive student-learning and student-development models" (Bourne-Bowie, 2000).

Sophomore Attrition

When sophomore students are having difficulties they often decide to withdraw from the university. Juillerat (2006) identified the increased tuition, housing issues, and selection of majors as major challenges for sophomores.

Sophomores put high value on an environment that promotes intellectual growth; valuable course content and excellent classroom instruction; knowledgeable, fair, and caring faculty; approachable and knowledgeable advisors; tuition that is worthwhile investment; adequate financial aid; a smooth registration process with a good variety of courses offered; and an enjoyable student experience" (Hunter, 2006, p.19). Graunke and Woosley (2005) reported that, "The commitment to an academic major and meaningful interaction with faculty and staff were significant predictors of academic success" (p. 374) among sophomore students.

Summary

The review of literature regarding the sophomore perception outlines many issues that arise within the relationship between the student and the institution during the freshman and sophomore year. It gives examples of issues that often hinder a sophomore student's completion of a degree. It also focused on the resources provided by the institution to the first year student and the sophomore feeling of being the middle child. Areas covered in the literature review were the Gateway Program, Gateway advisors, first year student- institution relationship, sophomore student- institution relationship, sophomore student- faculty relationship, sophomore student- student affairs relationship, and sophomore attrition. While there is a substantial amount of literature regarding the first year experience, the literature on second year students is not as extensive.

Chapter III

Methodology

Qualitative Design and Reasoning

Qualitative research uses a naturalistic inquiry method that involves the process of studying a group in its natural setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creswell (2005) stated, "Qualitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants, describes and analyzes these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner" (p. 39). Perl and Noldon (2000) stated that individual interviews allow researchers to bring forward unique cases and multiple perspectives that often remain invisible to quantitative researchers. "Qualitative research methods provide the tools for beginning to understand the complexity of campus life and student affairs. Metaphor as a way to describe meaning, thick description in the final case study, and interviewing that delves deeply into a respondent's perspective are techniques that assisted student affairs educators to better understand students' point of view" (Manning, 1992, p. 133). Much of the research discussed in the review of literature dealt with qualitative studies regarding the second year experience. One-on-one in-depth interviews were conducted to determine the perceptions of the participants regarding their differences of experiences during the first and second year of college. The intent of the present study is not to change the minds of the participants or to remove them from their natural settings; however it is designed to examine their perceptions of their sophomore year in college after successfully exiting the Gateway Program.

Research Questions

This study was an attempt to identify institutional and personal characteristics and/or choices that have assisted sophomore students who were admitted into Eastern Illinois University through the Gateway Program and were successfully released from the program in one year. "Is the Gateway Program, as structured, effective in developing its freshmen students in a manner that would help them to persevere on their own successfully in college as sophomores after being released from the program?" The successful transition from first year to second year is the focus of this study. A qualitative life history interview research design was used. Subjects were interviewed using a protocol described in detail below (Appendix E). The following general research questions guided the study:

1. What characteristics or traits did their assigned Gateway advisor possess that these students felt encouraged and enabled them to make satisfactory progress toward their bachelor's degree, and were these advisor characteristics similar to those of their second year academic advisor?
2. What program resources were provided during the first year Gateway experience that made a positive impact on the students' perception of their personal autonomy? Further, what Gateway program resources did students perceive as being useful to their academic success during their second year experience?

Participants

The research participants consisted of five Gateway students admitted to the program in Fall of 2004 who were successfully released from the program after their first year in college and are now in junior standing. Participants were in good academic standing and had earned at least 60 credit hours to achieve junior status at Eastern Illinois University.

Once identified, potential participants received a cover letter introducing the study and a statement of informed consent at the time of the first interview. Interviews were held at the Booth Library. The researcher explained the cover letter, statement of informed consent (Appendix B), and discussed any questions or concerns. Each participant signed a statement of informed consent containing an explanation of their rights and responsibilities before interviews began. Two general research questions listed above helped guide the interview protocol items (Appendix C). The researcher audio recorded the interview with each participant to assist in data collection and analysis. The IRB review approval form for this study is located in Appendix A.

In total, five former Gateway students were interviewed. Each student chose a pseudonym for the study. Luke* is a 21 year old Caucasian male with a "B" grade point average. His major is Family Consumer Sciences. Rachel* is a 21 year old Caucasian female student with a "C" grade point average. Her major is Biology. MK* is a 21 year old Caucasian female student with a "C" grade point average. She is a Health Studies major. Michelle* is a 21 year old African American female student with a "C" grade point average. She is a Communication Studies Major. Tina* (African American male who chose a female pseudonym) is 21 years old and is pursuing a degree in Business. He has a "B" grade point average.

After the interviews were completed, transcriptions of participants' responses were made. A follow up appointment was offered to each participant in order to member check (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) the transcribed interview tapes and provide participants an opportunity to clear up any misconceptions on the part of the researcher and provide any additional comments deemed necessary. These follow-up sessions were conducted at Booth Library. The participants could then provide additional input. This information was added to the initially transcribed interviews for purposes of verbal analysis.

Data Collection

The site for this study was Eastern Illinois University. The researcher's familiarity with the campus environment and the Gateway Program in particular was the primary reason for this selection. Eastern Illinois University is located in a small-size city in the central part of Illinois. The total enrollment of students was approximately 10,500 undergraduate students and 1,700 graduate students. White students comprised the vast majority of the undergraduate student body. The student sample chosen for this study was selected from special admit freshmen students who were enrolled in the University in the Fall of 2004. The total number of these students was 127. By the spring of 2007, 64 of these students remained at the University. The researcher randomly selected and contacted 12 of these students by email or an online message on Facebook.com. The first five of these students who volunteered to participate were selected by the researcher to become research participants. These students were selected because they had completed the Gateway Program in one year and have remained in good academic standing. They were also selected to ensure a good representation of former Gateway program participants at Eastern Illinois University.

Data Analysis

The researcher met individually with the five former Gateway students in good academic standing who were admitted in the Fall of 2004 with an anticipated graduation date of May 2008. The researcher conducted two one-on-one interviews with each research participant. At the initial interview, each participant received a cover letter that described the purpose of the study and a statement of informed consent. Research participants understood that they could withdraw from the study at any time. These interviews ranged from one half hour to one hour in length to provide the time necessary to collect data with as much rich description of their experiences as

possible. The researcher ensured that there would be opportunities for student participants to express their ideas and opinions during and at the end of interviews. In addition, no one had access to the names of the students or data for this study except the researcher. The interviews were audio recorded for later transcription by the researcher. After transcriptions and a reading of all initial interviews, follow-up interviews for purposes of member-checking with each respondent ranged from fifteen to thirty minutes. Follow up interviews were conducted to provide participants with an opportunity to reconfirm earlier statements and for the researcher to ask further questions based on emerging themes from the initial reading of all participant transcripts.

After the follow-up interviews, the researcher made transcripts of each interview in order to assist in data analysis. The researcher analyzed each interview response to each research question. Interview responses were then analyzed to verify related themes and issues. Using thick description from the respondent's own voices, emerging themes describing the Gateway experience in the context of these students' lives were developed.

The design of this study was patterned after the criteria designed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). They outlined four criteria that would assist the research in being valid: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. To guarantee credibility, initial interviews conducted for this research ranged from one half of an hour to one hour in length to provide the engagement necessary to collect data. Follow-up interviews were encouraged by the researcher with the participants if there was a need to reconfirm earlier statements, clarify meanings, and include additional comments when necessary. Also they were encouraged if more questions were raised that needed clarity in order to serve the purpose of the study. Follow-up interviews lasted from fifteen to thirty minutes. The follow-up interviews allowed the researcher the opportunity

to secure additional information on any issues that a participant felt important or were unclear to the researcher. Interview data were constantly compared with other interviews in order to identify themes and issues.

Triangulation is defined simply as different sets of data reaching the same conclusion (Schwandt, 1997). This study used methodological triangulation that involved multiple qualitative methods. Interviewing and document analysis of Gateway Program publications were the primary methods used in order to assess change (Guion, 2002). The triangulation of data assisted in the validation of the reliability of the findings in the study. The findings from both of these methods drew the same or similar conclusions, which gave validity to the findings. Debriefing was conducted through meetings with the thesis advisor and other members of the researcher's thesis committee. Transferability is a complicated issue for qualitative research and the thick description used in the Findings and Discussion sections assisted with this issue. The final criterion, confirmability, was achieved through the establishment of an audit trail in which the order of events and steps taken were maintained.

The Impact of the Researchers Identity on This Study

The researcher is a graduate assistant in the Gateway Program Office. The researcher has access to data about the Gateway Program. Therefore, the researcher has much knowledge of the program's structure and requirements. The researcher was moderately acquainted with some of the students. Overall, students provided honest data. They were willing to share their experiences and feelings about their freshman and sophomore year experiences freely. "The more you know about a given situation or problem, the better equipped you are to apply this knowledge to your work" (Farber, 2006. p. 376).

Limitations

A couple of limitations could affect the outcome of this study. First, it is possible for students to transfer to another college or university and be inaccessible for the study. Second, students may drop out of college because of unforeseen circumstances thus becoming inaccessible to the researcher. Third, student perceptions of their sophomore year experience less than one year after their experience may not be the same as if they were interviewed at a later time.

Summary

Chapter III outlines the research questions and contains the qualitative design of the present study. Five research participants who were admitted to EIU through the Gateway Program in the Fall of 2004 were interviewed using qualitative methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) regarding the Gateway Program, their academic advisors, and campus resources. The interview protocol was defined and consisted of in-depth interviews with each research participant. Individual interviews were transcribed and data analysis was discussed. Chapter IV presents the findings of the research while Chapter V contains the findings compared with selected published literature on first and second year experience programs, conclusions and recommendations for student affairs practitioners as well as recommendations for future researchers and the Gateway Program at Eastern Illinois University.

Chapter IV

Findings

Chapter IV outlines the findings of interviews conducted for this study. A selected sample of five former Gateway student participants were interviewed using qualitative methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) regarding their perceptions of their first year experience in college as a Gateway student and as a sophomore student who had successfully exited the program. The interviews were transcribed and emerging themes were identified according to the participants' tape recorded verbal responses as well as non verbal responses recorded by the Primary Investigator. The interview transcriptions were content analyzed and related themes were identified. Participants' self-selected pseudonym names were used in the findings.

The participants had unique yet similar experiences in their perceptions of their second year experience compared to their first year Gateway Program experience. The responses are presented in two major themes as advising findings and resources findings. In the advising findings the sub themes include; Advising Techniques, Student Comfort Level with Advisor, Academic Advisor Levels of Concern, and Advice with Selecting Majors. The sub themes for the resources findings are; The Effectiveness of Study Tables and Academic Tutors, Study Habits, Understanding of EIU Deadlines and Degree Requirements, and Workshops. At the end of the interview, each participant was given the opportunity to express what they appreciate the most out of the advising and resources provided by the Gateway Program. This information is located in the Gateway Access section of this chapter followed by Advice for future Gateway Students

Advising Findings

Student/ Advisor Relationship

All of the participants related the success of their first year experience to the relationship they had with their Gateway advisor. In fact, they all described their relationship with their Gateway advisor as being close, positive, helpful, and personable. Luke expressed a sense of passion and deep thought as he reminisced about his interaction with his advisor, "We had a close relationship. [Name of Gateway Advisor] was my advisor and she was very personable". Luke's facial expression was one of reassurance and great appreciation.

Rachel spoke with much confidence and in high spirits when she recalled her advisor.

I loved my Gateway advisor, and she really encouraged me to do my best and supported me. She also was very knowledgeable. When I had questions, she had the answers or was able to find the answers. My advisor was wonderful and caring and so supportive. I felt very comfortable coming and talking with her if I needed advice or just to talk with her on a personal level.

Responses were not as positive when participants described the relationship they had with their second year faculty advisor. Luke was an exception, since he identified his sophomore Trio advisor as his principal advisor rather than his assigned departmental academic adviser. His freshman Gateway advisor transferred to the Trio program, so he worked with the same person. .

Well... I had the same advisor. She moved from Gateway to Trio and I lucked up.

(Follow up interview) We had already developed a relationship so I was glad that I didn't have to get to know a new advisor and we were able to pick up where we left off the year before. She already knew a lot about my personal life and what was going on with me so I think it was good that she was there again because if not I probably wouldn't have had

anyone to talk to about my situation. Mainly because I probably wouldn't have wanted to open up to them the way I did to [advisor] but who knows I could be wrong.

Asked the same question about her second year academic advisor, Michelle [pseudonym] gave a frown of the eyebrows and stated, "I don't recall her name or what I did with her".

In Rachel's experience things were good with her sophomore advisor as far as her academic achievement was concerned. "Oh, it was good. We stuck mainly with academic work and keeping me on track as far as the classes that I was taking." Nothing in Rachel's interactions with her second year advisor related to any other issue outside of purely academic advising for program completion.

Tina did not seem as comfortable as the other students when he discussed his interactions with his sophomore academic advisor. He seemed short of words and very cautious in his choice of words. "I didn't feel very comfortable with her" he said slowly. "She knew nothing about me and always seemed rushed when I was there."

MK hesitated to make a statement about her sophomore academic advisor when she was asked to do so. She stated, "No comment" with a nervous laugh. After a few moments of silence she took a breath and stated,

I don't think I gave her a chance. My second year advisor was nothing like my Gateway advisor from the start and maybe I didn't give her a chance. I went into the transition with a bad attitude and I can admit that I was not open to her. I went to our meetings and I let her say what she had to say and I would say what I had to say and that was it. Maybe I could have been more social or something.

The five responses above illustrate the differences the participants perceived between their Gateway advisor and their sophomore academic advisor. The five respondents perceived

their Gateway advisors as open, supportive, personable, and willing to discuss a range of personal and academic issues. Their perception of relationships with sophomore advisors, however, implied that any discussion of non-academic issues was neither encouraged nor welcomed.

Advising Techniques

These junior respondents compared the techniques used by their first-year Gateway advisor two years earlier to their sophomore Academic Advisor. The answers given were short, and they often took a while to think of something to say, or they didn't give a statement at all. A common response was, "I don't know."

Rachel recalled that, "They both wrote down everything you said or the ideas you had as far as classes are concerned. That's about as in depth as my [name of major] advisor went as far as me and what I wanted to do."

Michelle and Tina both stated that their academic advisor's advising techniques had nothing in common with their Gateway advisor's personalized approach to advising.

Michelle stared towards the wall with a smile on her face. She took a few seconds to think and then stated, "Uhhh, I'm trying here! Sorry, I don't recall anything [that was the same]." Tina's response was the same. "Nothing, I mean she just did my scheduling for me and told me I was done."

One common theme was that all participants except for Luke, (who had the same advisor both years) would have liked their Academic Advisor to have been more like their Gateway Advisor. A common statement was that the participant would have liked their sophomore advisor to have been more personable and easier to approach. Michelle's was representative of all participants.

Well if there's anything my sophomore advisor could have done that my Gateway Advisor did, it would be to have taken more personal interest in me. I don't even remember the lady so she didn't make any impact on me that I can recall, but if she was more into me and what I needed like my Gateway advisor was then that would have been helpful.

Tina said he would have liked his sophomore advisor to have "talked to me more and asked me what classes I was interested in taking. Just being friendly would have been nice too!"

Student Comfort Level with Advisor

When the participants were asked about their comfort levels when they would discuss classes or personal issues with their Gateway Advisor, the answers ranged from "I felt extremely comfortable" [Michelle] to "It was a good relaxing kind of time for me" [Rachel].

Luke stated, "Nothing we talked about was like incredibly personal but we did talk about my relationship [with his girlfriend] and how I can manage school work with having a relationship. One example is like going to movies instead of hanging out all day and night and not getting my work [done]. I would just wait and take her to the movies and do my work during the day."

When expressing the sophomore year experience with their academic advisors and their comfort levels with discussing personal issues, respondents' answers began to differ from each other. Most of the participants stated that they would talk to their Residence Assistant, friends, family and their former Gateway Advisor before they would share anything of a personal nature with their sophomore advisor.

Luke stated, "I don't talk to nobody but my family and [name of advisor], my Trio and Gateway advisor. I feel more comfortable with my Trio advisor than I do my own family. [Trio

advisor's name] helped me out a lot. I don't want to go into great detail or anything but basically we have a similar family background and she knows where I'm coming from. She has been in my position and she gives me good advice. My family is my problem. Well, a part of my problem, so I don't talk to them."

Rachel stated that she still goes to the Gateway office for personal support because, "They all cared and still do, when I see them around campus or town they ask how I'm doing and what I've been up to."

Academic Advisor Levels of Concern

The participants related how the Gateway office staff tended to "go out of their way" to make sure issues were resolved.

Michelle said "If I had a major issue they would get back to me like ASAP! And they made sure they didn't let it go until the issue was resolved. Once I became a sophomore I was able to receive that same kind of support from my hall director."

MK stated, "As a sophomore I handled what I could by myself and then I also went back to my Gateway Advisor for any other issues that I had."

Luke said, "I just stuck with what I knew best, Trio and Gateway."

Rachel stated, "When I was in Gateway I never talked to anyone else about my personal life outside of Gateway. And once I was out of the program and even now I don't have the same relationship with my advisor that I did with the one from Gateway. They [major advisor] make it more uncomfortable to talk with them about anything besides school. It's like you just talk about class you don't talk about what's going on at the campus or they don't ask about how you are doing unless it has something to do with your classes."

Advice with Selecting Majors

When asked if the Gateway advisor was helpful in choosing a major, a majority of the students said yes. "She showed me what it was all about in the Eastern catalog after I told her what I wanted to do." [Luke].

MK stated, "I had no clue what I wanted to do when I first came to Eastern. My Gateway advisor would not tell me what I should major in. I felt discouraged because I didn't know what I was interested in doing but she was helpful in telling me all of my options and she was always asking questions as far as what I like to do."

When asked the same question about the participants' academic advisor and how helpful they were in making the choice of academic major, most of the participants stated they had already selected their major prior to meeting their second year advisor.

"I didn't need any help really my sophomore year. She already knew what I was going into." [Luke].

Rachel stated, "He was all about [the major field discipline] and that was it. But I guess since that is the department I was in then he would do that but I wanted to be a bit more open."

Resource Findings

The Effectiveness of Study Tables and Academic Tutors

Two of the Gateway Program's prominent resources are study tables and academic tutors provided for the Gateway students four days a week. The Gateway Program requires each student to attend at least two hours of study table sessions per week. At most of the study table sessions, tutors are available for a majority of the EIU General Education courses.

The primary investigator continued the interviews but wanted to focus more on the resources the Gateway Program provided for the participants. "Were the study tables and tutors

effective for you when you were in the Gateway Program?" Four of the five participants responded with a positive answer and attitude toward the study table sessions and the tutors.

I got all my work done and if I needed help it was there for me. I didn't have to search on my own for a tutor. Besides, at that time I probably wouldn't have known where to start and would have been too shy or just too lazy to try and find a tutor. I would have probably just tried to wing it! [Luke]

Tina was in between with his response.

Yes and no. I never had trouble doing homework so I was sometimes annoyed that I was forced to go to study tables. They were helpful though when I had to read a lot because I wouldn't get as distracted there as I would in my room.

Another student [Rachel] projected a positive attitude towards the study tables which led to the belief that they were very beneficial for her.

They were very effective. I was always able to finish my homework and I had a really high GPA because of them at the end of my first year. I enjoyed having the tutors there and in my opinion they were very helpful.

After being released from the Gateway Program the students chose other places to study. Tina and Luke began their answers by saying, "Nowhere". The other three stated, "My room or the library".

"I just study a little in my room because no one was making me go anywhere plus I could have the TV on". [MK]

I like to go to the library because of the resources and it is quiet there. The difference between the Gateway study tables and studying in the library is that I can get on a computer if I want or I can grab a book if I need to look something up. Plus I could move

to a quiet room or something. Those things weren't provided at study tables, especially the quietness. You had to learn which days to go to evening study tables. Usually if the person over the study tables is someone who doesn't let students just sit and talk and be loud, I would go on the day they were working. [Rachel]

During the participants' sophomore year in college, they all found other resources that served as tutoring resources. Michelle and Tina found their teachers and classmates to be helpful. "I talked to my teachers and classmates but mostly just my teachers" [Michelle].

I would make an appointment with the departmental tutors that my teachers told me about. Some of my classmates went to them and they told me how helpful they were and that I should go see them when I needed help, which was often [Tina].

Rachel stated, "My friends and my boyfriend at the time would help me with my homework".

Luke had a different experience. "There weren't very many options available for normal students. You had to be a part of Gateway to get tutoring; otherwise it was really limited".

During a follow up interview the researcher asked Luke, "Did you not know that even when you exit from the Gateway Program, you can still use the tutoring and study table resources?" Luke's response was, "Really, no, I didn't know that. I thought it was strictly for the Gateway kids. So could I use them now if I wanted to?" It seemed that Luke had either been misinformed or just did not know the facts. There is no rule stating you have to be in Gateway in order to use the tutors and study table areas. Therefore the researcher's response to this question was, "Yes".

Study Habits

The Gateway Program provides the students with additional resources that were created to help improve students' study habits. The participants were asked, "What resources were

provided to them while they were in the Gateway Program that helped to establish better study habits, if any?"

Luke stated, "The reading and writing center mostly and the inspiration I acquired from the staff of Gateway to keep and maintain that high GPA".

Tina didn't state any resources that helped him.

I don't know that any of them actually helped me with my study habits. I mean I went to study tables as a freshman and as a sophomore I just did my own thing. I went to the library or I just studied in my room for the most part. I don't have problems with studying. Even in high school I did fine with getting my work done.

Michelle stated,

The GST 1000 class helped big time! I really needed that class and I learned a lot about how to study and stay organized. Then when I became a sophomore I didn't do so well with studying and staying on top of things. I think that's why my GPA dropped the way it did. But I'm studying now!

The participants were asked to explain specifically what helped them maintain good study habits during their sophomore year. None of the participants recalled any of EIU's resources being of help. They mentioned things such as "internal motivation" [Luke] or "paying attention" and "just being really organized" [MK].

Tina stated, "My parents telling me if I didn't keep my grades up I wouldn't be back the next semester! That's what made me study!!"

Understanding of EIU deadlines and Degree Requirements.

When attending an institution of higher education, it is imperative to have the correct information when it comes to deadlines and degree requirements or else students risk the chance

of delaying their degree or not receiving one at all. Each participant was asked, "At the beginning of your sophomore year, did you feel that the Gateway Program had prepared you and helped you to understand the university's deadlines and degree requirements? Luke, Rachel, and MK all answered "yes".

"Yes, we were required to take specific classes that prompted us like GST 1100 and University Foundations. Those classes gave us a lot of information when it came to EIU's requirements." [Luke]

MK stated, "Yes I had all the right classes and somehow I made it through my sophomore so yes." And Rachel's answer was similar. "Yes, they told me what to expect and I did expect it!"

Tina wasn't as enthused.

Please don't take offense to this but I had a Graduate Assistant and she was really good until we got to talking more and more about my major. She seemed unsure about things such as what GPA I had to have to get into the program or what math I needed to take. I liked my advisor but they just didn't have some of the answers I needed.

Michelle stated, "For the most part but I hadn't really chosen a major so I was still looking into things and figuring out what I wanted to do."

The next question was focused more on whom or what helped the participants with questions they had about the university guidelines and degree requirements during their sophomore year.

MK said, "I just remembered stuff from my Gateway Advisor or I would sometimes go back and ask [name of Gateway advisor]". Tina stated, "I would ask my teachers or I would go

back to my Gateway Advisor." "I would go to the advisors from the department. Not the lady [sophomore academic advisor] at 9th street but I would go to talk to the departmental advisors."
[Michelle]

The Gateway Program staff is trained to give resources and campus services information to the students who are a part of the program. During the interviews the primary researcher asked each participant, "In Gateway, who or what served as a good source for information about other campus services?" Each of the participants mentioned their Gateway advisor. Three of the five mentioned the staff. Tina began his answer by naming members of the Gateway staff and the Gateway Advisors and concluded by stating, "Everyone, the whole office was right there for you." Michelle's response was similar, "My advisor and the staff around the office."

"My advisor and other advisors in the program along with the staff like [names a man and woman], they were very helpful, especially [the man]. He always was asking, "How's it going?" [Luke] Rachel stated, "I loved [Gateway advisor name]. She was my advisor. And I would talk to [woman's name] sometimes and [man's name], just about everyone in the office could help you out!"

The participants were also asked who or what was a good source of information for campus resources and services during their sophomore year and the answers varied. Tina, MK, and Luke said they went back to the Gateway office. Luke tilted his head to the side and began to ramble off different resources. "Gateway, friends, advertisements..." Tina mentioned he had two sisters who attended EIU so he would often call them or ask them what he could do if he had a problem. "I just ask my sisters and friends. I would talk to my sisters because they both go to school here and they know what I should do or where I can go if I need personal help and stuff like that." None of the students had a professional contact on the campus that they sought out to

gain information on resources or services except the students who recalled going to the Gateway Office.

Workshops

During the time a student is a part of the Gateway Program they have to attend mandatory academic success and personal adjustment workshops. These workshops were developed to help student with their holistic adjustment to college. When asked if the workshops helped them to develop themselves as better college students, four of the five students said "yes". Luke recalled how they "reinforced my positive behavior and how they reassured me that I was on the right track and encouraged me to keep going."

Michelle stated, "It was just more information for me to find out what happened around campus, that's it."

MK viewed the workshops a bit differently. "They were very boring sometimes. They were often a pain in the butt to have to go to!"

As sophomores, the participants could make a choice if they wanted to attend the EIU sponsored workshops or not. All but one of the participants stopped attending workshops after being released from Gateway. This student gave the statement, "Yeah it just depended on what the topic was and how much free time I had."

Gateway Access

The researcher wanted to know what the participants appreciated the most from the advising and the resources the Gateway program provided and what they would still utilize if they had access to it. Four of the five students said they would choose the staff and advisors. And three of the five mentioned they would like to have access to both the advisors and the study tables. "Forced study table hours! I just really needed that." "I would like to have access to the

staff. They were good and helpful, I still go back.” “The weekly advisory appointments and study tables [were very helpful].”

Advice for Future Gateway Students

At the end of each interview, the researcher gave each participant a chance to add any additional information to their interview that they felt would be helpful to the newly admitted and future Gateway students. Three of the five participants chose to release a statement.

Gateway is a program that is there for your success. And the entire student cohort who can should take advantage of it. When you're in the real world, it's hard to find such a fine group of individuals who are there to help and see you succeed. So I would say appreciate them and lastly take advantage of opportunities. There are people who wish they could get an opportunity like this one. And I have some tips!! 1. Take care of business first. 2. Know that time management is very important. 3. Organized your life! 4. Redefine yourself. 5. Create the person you want to be spiritually, mentally, emotionally, socially, and intellectually. [Luke]

I feel that the Gateway Program was a blessing for me. My advisor really helped me through my first year on campus. I feel that coming through the department I have the help from the entire Minority Affairs office. I know some of my friends who didn't come through Gateway so they don't really know about the Minority Affairs Office. The program is great and I really feel like it is the reason for my success here at EIU. The program offered me leadership opportunities and networking with other faculty and students on campus. [Michelle]

“Just make sure you maintain a good connection with the advisors”- [MK]

Summary

Chapter IV outlined the findings of the research study according to views, perceptions and opinions of participants. Many related themes emerged from the participants' experience while in the Gateway Program as well as during their second year experience once they exited the program. While members of the Gateway Program, the most common theme expressed was appreciation for the Gateway Advisor. Each participant showed a sense of enjoyment when they spoke about their Gateway Advisor. They liked the techniques that were used and they felt a sense of comfort when they interacted with their Gateway Advisor along with the Office of Minority Affairs staff members. A majority of the students also gained from the study table and tutoring resources provided to them by the Gateway Program

During the second year experience, each participant had a different outlook when it came to their academic advisor along with their academic success. Instead of depending on their academic advisors for additional help they began to seek out other sources such as their resident assistant, friends or former Gateway Advisor.

An overall common theme found by the researcher was that the participants had common issues and schedules of events during their time while members of the Gateway Program. Therefore, a lot of their answers were the same. They utilized a lot of the same resources as a requirement of the Gateway Program. Yet that pattern changed drastically amongst all participants once they began their second year experience. Once the participants were released from the Gateway Program it was up to them to seek out additional help with academics and any other issues that may have come up.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to understand the perception of sophomore students who were successfully released from the Gateway Program and are now progressing through their college careers at Eastern Illinois University. What was their college experience like without the extra resources and intrusive advising assistance of first year Gateway advisors and support services during their sophomore year? The focus of this study was to examine how the Gateway program's personalized attention and support services helped to prepare its underrepresented and disadvantaged freshmen students for their personal and academic developmental changes that occur during the sophomore year.

Research Question #1: What characteristics or traits did the participants assigned Gateway advisor possess that the students believed encouraged and enabled them to make satisfactory progress toward their bachelor's degree, and were these advisor characteristics similar to those of their second year academic advisor?

Many studies have examined the characteristics of academic advisors' knowledge on related theories and techniques to guide students throughout their academic career (Gordon, Habley & Assoc., 2000). Yet, more recent authors have concluded that intrusive advising has become more and more essential for college students, particularly for at-risk students that include disabled, academically disadvantaged, ethnic minorities, low socio-economic status and academically probationary students (Heisserer and Paretter, 2002).

The type of guidance provided to the participants by their Gateway advisor was similar amongst all five participants in comparison to the guidance of the participant's second year advisors. All participants formed a more bonded interpersonal relationship with their Gateway advisor than they did with their second year academic advisor, with one exception where the first year advisor was also a second year advisor. The participants communicated with their Gateway advisor on a more personal level in regards to their personal well being whereas the second year academic advisors seemed to display more of an impersonal demeanor and style of advising. Advisor's level of interest in the participants' academic progress as well as their personal issues played a significant part in the effects the academic advising techniques had on the students' perceptions of their advisors in both the first and second year of college.

During the sophomore year, the students did not turn to their academic advisors for personal support as much as they did with their first-year Gateway Advisor. Some of them turned to their Resident Assistant and Hall Director.

[Michelle] "If I had a major issue they [Gateway staff] would get back to me like ASAP!

And they made sure they didn't let it go until the issue was resolved. Once I became a sophomore I was able to receive that same kind of support from my hall director."

This statement exemplifies how the students' living community effects their holistic development. The role of a residence hall staff helps students to continue to pursue and further their education and development. (Inkelas, Vogt, & Associates, 2006). Others returned to the Gateway program even though they were no longer participants because it was there that they found personal support. "They all cared and still do, when I see them around campus or town they ask how I'm doing and what I've been up to." The need to feel the sense of belonging and having the support of an extended family is expressed in the voices of the participants. Most

Gateway Students are also participants in the Office of Minority Affairs Peer Helper Program. The Peer Helper Program was designed to give students a sense of belongingness to the campus family. Each freshman or transfer participant is linked with an undergraduate Peer Leader to be someone they can turn to when they need help and guidance. This connection with an undergraduate peer helps the student to bond with the university socially as well as academically (Eastern Illinois University, 2005).

Smith (2002) conducted a study that showed students preferred intrusive or developmental advising over strictly academic advising, also known as prescriptive advising. However, the information provided by the participants suggested that sophomore academic advisors should take more intrusive roles similar to the Gateway Advisors. According to the participants, the academic advisors utilized techniques that focused solely on the academic well-being of the participants and not the whole student. These participants viewed their Gateway Advisor as being caring, willing to help in any way possible and approachable no matter the situation. Initially, the participants believed their academic advisor would have used the same advising techniques as their former Gateway Advisor. They learned rather quickly that was not the case. Gateway Advisors are trained to use more intrusive skills and techniques (advising / training program). The transition from the support of an intrusive advisor directly to a prescriptive academic advisor has been difficult for these participants. These participants found their academic advisors seemed to be more closed off to discussing issues outside of the academic realm based on statements about their sophomore advisor's verbal and non verbal communication.

They make it more uncomfortable to talk with them about anything besides school. It's like you just talk about class. You don't talk about what's going on at the campus or they don't ask about how you are doing unless it has something to do with your classes.

Research Question #2: What program resources were provided during the first year Gateway experience that made a positive impact on the students' perception of their personal autonomy? Further, what Gateway program resources did students perceive as being useful to their academic success during their second year experience?

Since the early 1980's much attention and effort has been put towards the first year of the college experience. Faculty and staff at most institutions are taking time to help first year students succeed. "For new students, college presents a foreign set of norms, traditions, and rituals, and a new language and environment" (Hunter, 2006, p.4).

Many institutions of higher education provide freshman students with a wide variety of resources to help them through their transition to college. Freshman students usually attend orientation; first year seminars, academic advising meetings, and they often live in learning communities or have residence education programs in their residence halls.

The Gateway Program staff provided many different resources for their participants during their first year. However, the students expressed they would like to have access to some of those resources as sophomore students, such as their Gateway advisors. Many of the academic advisors from the Gateway Program played the role of the parent away from home for many of the students. The students depended on their advisor to tell them about different resources on campus when they needed additional help that the advisor may not have been able to provide for them. During the sophomore year, once released from the Gateway Program, students were still

wanting and needing the extra guidance they received from their Gateway Advisor during their freshman year.

Recommendations for Present and Former Gateway Students

1. Begin to seek out other tangible resources outside of the Gateway Program when you first arrive to campus. Take the personal risk, and do not limit yourself to engaging only with professionals and peers who possess similar backgrounds as yours.
2. Be open to the diverse resources provided on campus throughout each year of your academic career. Rather than attending workshops, seminars, lectures, etc. only to fulfill a grade requirement, take action in helping yourself to become better prepared as a professional and a citizen.
3. Successful Gateway students should volunteer as Minority Affairs Peer Leaders to assist in helping future students with the transition from high school to college. Their contributions as Minority Affairs Peer Leaders will help new students to develop mentoring relationships within their Gateway cohort and other university students, faculty and staff members.
4. All Gateway program students should speak out about any concerns they have pertaining to their academic and personal development at Eastern Illinois University. Voice your opinions to Gateway staff members, academic advisors, department chairpersons, and the teaching faculty members. Write detailed comments on any program evaluation forms, and on student evaluation of teaching performance forms.

Recommendations for Institutional and Gateway Program Policies

1. There is an institutional impact on the Gateway students' lives that should be re-examined when implementing rules and regulations. Do mid-term grade reporting requirements specifically for Gateway students make them a target of stereotype threat (Steele, Spencer & Aronson, 2002)?
2. The policies of the program should be analyzed thoroughly to determine if any parts of the policy hinders student academic and / or social progress. In what ways are these students institutionally stigmatized by being a part of this program?

Recommendations for the Gateway Program and the Academic Advisor

1. Successful Gateway students should be solicited to volunteer as Minority Affairs Peer Leaders to assist in helping future students with the transition from high school to college. Their contributions as Minority Affairs Peer Leaders will help new students to develop mentoring relationships within their Gateway cohort and other university students, faculty and staff members.
2. Gateway Advisors and Academic Advisors should develop relationships with each other and continue to update one another about different academic advising techniques that are beneficial to the students in order to increase student retention. This would help make the advisor transition easier for the student and their new advisor and enhance the college experience.
3. Partnerships with the two academic advisors should be pursued to increase mentoring activities for all students, not just Gateway students.
4. The Gateway Program should provide the former Gateway participants with a resource person they can return to in the Gateway Office whenever they need

additional help or information. This person would keep in contact with the former participants as a retention tool.

5. Implement a retreat for the Gateway Advisors, Academic Advisors, Trio, Graduate Assistant's and Residence Hall Directors. The retreat should focus on developing relationships between the different offices and how to better serve Gateway admitted students. Some training themes that should be included are:

- a. How intrusive advising impacts retention rates
- b. Sensitivity Training
- c. Diversity Awareness beyond ethnic differences

The overall goal of the retreat will be to help create a successful living learning environment and community for students. (Maher, 2003).

Recommendations for Future Researchers

1. Future research should interview a more diverse and larger group of former Gateway participants. In addition, future research should include graduate students who entered Eastern through the Gateway program as well as students who are professionals in various career fields.
2. Participants should be grouped and studied using the following categories:
 - a. Former Gateway students who graduated from Eastern within 4 1/2 to 5 years with their degree.
 - b. Former Gateway students who did not complete their degree.
 - c. Former Gateway students who transferred from Eastern once they exited the Gateway Program and graduated within 4 1/2 to 5 years.

- d. Former Gateway students who transferred from Eastern but did not complete their degree.
3. Future research should look at the success rates and experience of former Gateway students.
4. Future research should look at the effect of the Gateway Program on college attendance.
5. Future research should look at the success for the Gateway Program classes and mandatory workshops that educates students on the importance of student development and higher education.
6. Future research should inquire the point of views from:
 - a. Gateway Advisors and staff
 - b. Office Of Minority Affairs Gateway Program Graduate Assistants
 - c. Academic Advisors
 - d. EIU Professorsabout the program, the students it produces and its retention rate.
7. Future research in this area should continue to examine the impact of interpersonal relationships and "home away from home" influence on Gateway students' personal and academic choices.
8. Future research should examine the geographical locations of the Gateway Office, Academic Center, Trio Office and evening study tables. If they were all located in the same building, in effect, a one-stop advising center (Gorden & Habley & Assoc., 2000), would the easy access to each office increase collaboration and communication among professional advisors in all three offices, as well as reducing

the confusion about where to go for help that the research participants in this study expressed?

9. Future research should examine how the label of being a Gateway student effects the academic and social development of the student. Are there any hidden biases that comes with this label? What stigmatism comes along with being a student or former student in the program? There may be some biases formed in the academic settings such as the classrooms. The professors know which of their students are in the program. There may even be some social biases. No matter how hard a student may try to keep the fact that they are in the program a secret, if they attend evening study tables, (which is located in one of the dining services in the campus living community) anyone who walks by the walls made of mostly glass will see them. Once the student has been released from the program does the stigmatism, if any, follow them throughout the rest of their academic career?

Conclusion

The primary purpose of the present study was to understand the perception of sophomore students who were successfully released from the Gateway Program and are now progressing through their college careers at Eastern Illinois University without the extra resources and intrusive advising assistance of first year Gateway advisors and support services during their sophomore year. The focus of this study was to examine how the Gateway program's personalized attention and support services helped to prepare its underrepresented and disadvantaged freshmen students for their personal and academic developmental changes that occur during the sophomore year.

Weir, Dickman and Fuqua (2005) found that students preferred both developmental and prescriptive advising. However, this research showed that students preferred intrusive advising which they received from their Gateway Advisor. The Gateway Program was designed for the students and the advisor to have a close relationship. The participants expressed that they believed the Gateway Program showed support and was a support system to them throughout their freshman year and beyond.

Once released from the program, the students did not seek out campus resources and some of them began to wrestle within themselves and ask, "Why am I not doing as well as I did last year?" Despite its limitations, this study provided additional support to not only help researchers help students answer the above question but it also supported other research concerning the Gateway Program, intrusive advising and the second year experience (Robinson, 2006). It enhanced appreciation of the association between the advisor-student relationship and student holistic development.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

Zimbra Collaboration Suite

IRB Review Approval - Harris, 07-015

Friday, February 09, 2007 4:09:52 PM

From: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

To: mlharris@eiu.edu; cgeberly@eiu.edu

Cc: casiddens@eiu.edu

February 9, 2007

MaKesha Harris
Counseling and Student Development

Thank you for submitting the research protocol titled "Gateway Program: Perceptions of the Second Year Student" for review by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has Approved this research protocol following an Expedited Review procedure.

IRB review has determined that the protocol involves no more than minimal risk to subjects and satisfies all of the criteria for approval of research.

This protocol has been given the IRB number 07-015. You may proceed with this study from 2/9/2007 to 2/8/2008. You must submit Form E, Continuation Request, to the IRB by 1/5/2008 if you wish to continue the project beyond the approval expiration date.

This approval is valid only for the research activities, timeline, and subjects described in the above named protocol. IRB policy requires that any changes to this protocol be reported to, and approved by, the IRB before being implemented. You are also required to inform the IRB immediately of any problems encountered that could adversely affect the health or welfare of the subjects in this study. Please contact me, or the Compliance Coordinator at 581-8576, in the event of an emergency. All correspondence should be sent to:

Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
Telephone: 581-8576
Fax: 217-581-7181
Email: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

Upon completion of your research project, please submit Form G, Completion of Research Activities, to the IRB, c/o the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

Thank you for your assistance, and the best of success with your research.

John Best, Chairperson
Institutional Review Board
Telephone: 581-6412
Email: jbbest@eiu.edu

Appendix B

Consent to Participate in Research

Consent to Participate in Research

Student Perceptions of Their Readiness for the Sophomore Experience

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by MaKesha Harris, a College Student Affairs graduate student Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a former Gateway student who was admitted in the fall of 2004 with an anticipated graduation date of May 2008. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding to participate. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

Participate in an in-depth interview with the researcher and answer a series of questions about your experiences during both your freshman and sophomore year particularly focusing on your involvement in the Gateway Program and how its tools helped to assist you during your sophomore year.

There are no reasonable foreseeable risks or discomforts, including physical inconveniences and their likelihood, that will develop based on the significance of this study. Participants in the study will not receive benefits but the information gathered will serve as a source of information for Eastern Illinois University's Academic Department, Student Affairs Department and the Gateway Program staff when determining ways to enhance the well-being and successfulness (i.e., degree attainment) of the sophomore students at Eastern Illinois University.

Any information obtained in connection with this student and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of the principal investigator. In reported data, a pseudonym will be used in place of participants' names. You will not be identified by names. The recorded data will be stored in a locked desk to which no one will have access other than the Principal Investigator. Information from the participants who formally withdraw from the study will remain confidential. All documentation and recorded interviews will be destroyed after the completion of the research project.

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services for Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact the principle investigator, MaKesha Harris or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Charles Eberly, at the following addresses:

MaKesha Harris
Blair Hall
Charleston IL 61920
mlharris@eiu.edu
(217) 581-6692

Dr. Charles Eberly
Buzzard Hall
Charleston ILL, 61920
ceberly@eiu.edu
(217) 581- 7235

Appendix C
Rights of Research Subjects

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Principle Researcher

Date

Appendix D

Participation E-mail

Email/ Facebook.com message

Hello

This is MaKesha Harris and I am a G.A. in the Gateway Office. This year I am completing my master's thesis research and my subject deals specifically with the Gateway program. Ms. Mona Davenport gave me your name and I am hoping you would be willing to do an interview with me about your sophomore year experiences after you left Gateway. Please contact me and let me know if you are willing to be a participant in the study. Thanks!

Appendix E
Interview Protocol

Interview Protocols

___ Introduction to study
from study

___ Confidentiality and right to withdraw

Name: (pseudo name for the study) _____

Sex _____

Age _____

Major/ Department _____

Ethnicity _____

Freshman GPA _____

Sophomore GPA _____

Advising

1. Describe the relationship you had as a gateway student between yourself and your Gateway advisor.
2. Describe the relationship you had as a sophomore student between yourself and your academic advisor in Ninth Street Hall.
3. As a sophomore what do you remember your academic advisor advisement techniques used by doing while they advised you that was the same as your former Gateway advisor did when you were a freshman?
4. What did your Gateway Advisor do that you would have liked your sophomore academic advisor to do while she/he was advising you, and vice versa?
5. Tell me how comfortable you felt talking about classes or personal issues with the Gateway advisor. Please give me some examples.
6. Who were the people you talked to about classes or personal issues once you were released from Gateway? How comfortable did you feel sharing your issues with that person / these people? Could you give me some examples?
7. In what ways did you learn about the people you talked with about classes or personal issues after you left the Gateway program? Do you remember Gateway advisors specifically recommending that you talk with certain people about classes or personal issues once you leave the Gateway program? Please tell me about these people.
8. In what ways do you feel that the Gateway office staff and advisors were concerned about you and your academic career?
9. As a sophomore, who on campus do you believe was as concerned about you and your academic career as the Gateway staff and advisors?
10. While in Gateway did the Gateway Staff respond effectively to your issues and concerns? Please explain your answer.
11. Who did you go to as a sophomore student about your issues and concerns?
12. In what ways was your Gateway advisor helpful as you considered what major to take?

13. As a sophomore, in what ways was your academic advisor helpful as you considered what major to take?

Resources

14. Were study tables effective for you when you were in the Gateway Program? Please explain your answer.
15. Where did you go for study time during your sophomore year?
16. What were the reasons you chose those places?
17. In Gateway, were the tutors at study tables helpful to you?
18. As a sophomore, where did you go if you wanted tutoring services?
19. Where did you learn about these tutoring services?
20. In Gateway, what resources were provided that helped you to establish better study habits, if any?
21. As a sophomore what specifically helped you maintain good study habits?
22. At the beginning of your sophomore year, did you feel Gateway prepared you and helped you to understand the university's deadlines and degree requirements? Please explain your answer.
23. Throughout your sophomore year, who or what helped you with questions you may have had about the university or degree requirements?
24. In Gateway, who or what served as a good source for information about other campus services?
25. As a sophomore, who or what was a good source of information for campus services?
26. In Gateway how did the mandatory workshops help you?
27. As a sophomore did you continue to attend various workshops on campus, and do you find them to be helpful?

Any additional information the student would like to add that was not asked

Appendix F

Gateway Program Policies, Procedures, and Agreement Form

GATEWAY PROGRAM
PARTICIPANT AGREEMENTName _____
Social Security No. _____

Home Address _____

Telephone No. _____

INTRODUCTION

If you are academically qualified, you will be admitted to the Gateway Program on the condition that you agree to the terms listed below. PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THIS DOCUMENT. If you fail to comply with the terms of this agreement, you may be dismissed from the program and the university.

TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT

I will agree to the following terms as a condition of my admission to Eastern Illinois University and realize that my continuation at the University depends upon my academic performance and compliance with these terms.

1. Enroll as a full-time student in courses recommended by the designated Gateway Advisor, and will not change these courses without the consent of the Gateway advisor.
2. Participate in the one-and-one-half day summer "EIU Preview" and fall orientation programs.
3. Live in university-operated residence halls unless an exemption is approved.
4. Attend all classes as required and participate in the academic support activities, workshops, and seminars as recommended by the Gateway advisor.
5. Maintain regular contact with the designated Gateway advisor.
6. Participate in extra-curricular activities only with the approval of the Gateway advisor.

Gateway students are subject to the same standards of academic warning, probation, and dismissal as students who meet regular admission requirements specified for all entering freshmen.

The University reserves the right to change, add to, modify, or eliminate any of the above terms upon written notice to the student.

I agree to the condition as specified in this Agreement.

Signature _____

Date _____
(Student)

Signature _____

Date _____
(Parent or Legal Guardian)

GATEWAY PROGRAM
ADMISSION/EXIT CRITERIA

Eastern Illinois University: Regular Admission Requirements

1. ACT of 18 and either upper quarter of high school class or 3.0 gpa
2. ACT of 19 and either upper half of high school class or 2.5 gpa
3. ACT of 22 and either upper three fourths of high school class or 2.25 gpa

Gateway Program: Admission Requirements

1. Minimum ACT of 14
2. Minimum of a "C" average in high school
3. Demonstrated potential:
 - a. Submit a writing sample
 - b. Submit three letters of recommendation

Gateway Program: Exit Criteria

1. Complete two consecutive semesters with a 2.0 or higher gpa with a minimum of 20 hours towards graduation (consistency is the key to college success).
Example: Fall 2.50, Spring 2.75, cum gpa 2.65
2. If a student is in **good standing after two semesters** (cum gpa of 2.0 or better) but he/she fails to meet the consecutive semester requirement, the student can be released if he/she completes a third semester with a 2.0 or higher gpa. Example: Fall (#1) 2.30, Spring 1.90, cum gpa 2.21, Fall (#2) 2.5
3. If a student is not in good standing after two semesters, but makes significant progress at the end of his third semester, he or she may be released at the discretion of the Gateway Staff and the Director of Minority Affairs.
4. Complete four semesters.
5. Be academically dismissed.
6. Be dismissed for disciplinary reasons.
7. Be dismissed at the end of the first two semesters for failure to make significant progress.

GATEWAY PROGRAM
EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

REQUIREMENTS FOR GATEWAY STUDENTS

First Semester

1. Twenty-minute weekly intrusive advisement appointment.
2. Study Tables 4 hours per week, Monday-Thursday, from 8:30-10:30 p.m. in Taylor Dining Hall. Daytime hours may be done at an alternative location.
3. Required Classes:
GST 1000 - Study Skills (You may be exempt from this course depending on your ACT and/or Nelson-Denny Reading Test Score.)
EIU 1111 - University Foundations
4. Will be required to attend several workshops as well as other resources as necessary during the semester.
5. Grade reports are requested from professors at 5 and 10 weeks.
6. Students may **NOT** participate in or affiliate with Greek organizations.
7. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in the Peer Helper Program.

**GATEWAY PROGRAM
EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

**REQUIREMENTS FOR GATEWAY STUDENTS
Second Semester**

1. Twenty-minute weekly intrusive advisement appointment.
2. If student receives a 2.65 gpa Fall semester and earns at least 10 hours toward graduation, he/she will be excused from study tables. If the individual appears on the D/F list at midterm, he/she will be required to attend 4 hours of study tables for the rest of the semester.
3. If the student receives a 2.65 gpa Fall semester, he or she must return to study tables at the beginning of Spring semester. Students with a 2.25-2.64 the first semester will be required to do 4 study table hours per week. Students receiving a 2.0-2.24 the first semester will be requires to do 6 hours. Students falling below 2.0 will be required to do 8 hours of study tables until they are back in good standing.
4. Required classes:
GST 1100 (8-week Career Seminar)
5. Grade reports are requested from professors at 5 and 10 weeks.
6. Students in GATEWAY must live in University-operated residence halls. This does not include University Court.
7. Students may **NOT** participate in or affiliate with Greek Organizations.
8. In order to get out of GATEWAY at the end of spring semester, a student must have two (2) consecutive semesters of a 2.0 gpa or better and earn a minimum of 20 hours toward graduation.

**GATEWAY PROGRAM
EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

DOs AND DON'Ts OF GATEWAY

Dos

1. **Do attend all** regularly scheduled classes.
2. **Do attend all** regularly scheduled appointments with your advisor.
3. **Do attend all** study table sessions the required number of hours that you are scheduled to be there.
4. **Do communicate** regularly with those people listed above if any type of problem or situation arises.
5. **Do keep** a copy of your entire course schedule with you at all times.
6. **Do call or email** your instructors prior to missing any classes due to illnesses. (No other absences will be excused.)
7. **Do keep** a calendar with you at all times so that you may be prepared to schedule any further upcoming events.
8. **Do immediately** inform your advisor of any work that you get back with a grade of C or lower on it.
10. **Do check with your advisor** before dropping any classes.

DON'Ts

1. **Don't** pledge or join any Greek **or little sister** organization as long as you are in the program.
2. **Don't** go to class late.
3. **Don't** come to study tables without specific materials to work on during the entire study time.
4. **Don't** make excuses for inappropriate behaviors. Just assume the responsibility that you have committed to.
5. **Don't** accumulate points.

**GATEWAY PROGRAM
EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

Disciplinary Policies and Procedures

A. Policies

The Gateway Program operates under a point system. Students who violate the rules and regulations of the program will receive points. Once a student reaches 21 or more points, his folder is sent automatically to Judicial Affairs for possible sanctions.

Points:

- Study Tables (1 point per hour)
- Weekly Appointment (2 points)
- Mandatory Workshops/Career Course (2 points)
- Mandatory Meeting (3 points)

Point Deduction: In some instances, absences may be made up and corresponding points deducted at the discretion of the advisor.

Warning letters will be sent to the student at the following levels:

- 5 points
- 10 points (copy to parents)
- **15 points (according to the advisor's discretion)**
 - Will require a student to appear before the Gateway Staff for Review.
 - Failure to comply with the recommendations of the Gateway Staff may result in the student being sent to the Judicial Affairs Office.

Additional Violations:

- Students who pledge a Greek letter organization, Sweethearts or Little Sister/Little Brother organization will be automatically suspended from the program and thereby, the University.
- Excessive and continuous absences from classes may result in points being given and/or suspension from the program and thereby, the University.
- Disruptive and uncooperative behavior in study tables, classrooms, advisement meetings and/or other campus events may be punished by referral to the Judicial Affairs Office and/or suspension/dismissal from the program and thereby, the University.

Gateway Probation: Students who fail to receive above a 1.75 within a semester will be put on Gateway Probation for the following semester with specific grade, class and study table requirements. Failure to meet these requirements will result in dismissal from the program and thereby, the University.

B. Procedures

Gateway is a provisional admission program. Students admitted under this program do not meet normal admissions standards. Therefore, dismissal from the Gateway Program will result in dismissal from the University. If the program's rules and regulations, as reflected in the Gateway Agreement, the Point System, or the directions of the Gateway Advisor are seriously and/or continuously violated, the student's folder will be reviewed by the Gateway Staff.

1. If the violation is serious or repeated, the student will be sent to the Judicial Affairs Office with a possible sanction or suspension from the university.
2. In the case of a potential suspension or an expulsion, the affected student will be notified in writing of the proposed sanctions and the time and date of the Judicial Board Hearing. The Judicial Board may recommend an appropriate sanction(s) up to and including dismissal from the program and thereby, the University.
3. If a sanction of suspension or dismissal from the program is approved by the board, a written notice of the decision will be sent to both the student and his/her parents or guardian.
4. Students who accumulate 10 or more points prior to being released from the program will have a hold placed on their records until sufficient study table hours are completed to reduce total points to 9.

GST 1100-Career Development Course

Spring Semester

Length of Course: A 50-minute session offered once a week for eight weeks.

Objectives

This course is designed to help individuals develop the skills needed to make wise decisions regarding their academic and career goals through.

- Developing greater self-awareness through analysis of various personality characteristics, interests, competencies, skills, aptitudes, and values,
 - Understanding the process of decision-making skills in choosing a major and/or career.
 - Understanding the process of career research and gain an appreciation of available career resources.
-

Topics Discussed

Self Assessment

- What motivates you?
- Recognizing your strengths

Career Research

- Exploring careers related to your interests/major
- Discovering opportunities in job shadowing & internships
- Learning about the career services available on campus

Career Planning

- Tips for successful resumes & interviews
 - Developing a four year career action plan
 - The benefits of networking in organizations and cultivating mentors
-

**GATEWAY PROGRAM
EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

GATEWAY Agreement

Name _____ Social Security
No. _____

Home Address

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone:

The policies listed below are designed for students admitted to Eastern Illinois University under the Gateway Program. These policies are designed to enhance a Gateway Student's academic success.

By signing this agreement, I understand that I must follow the terms as a condition of my admission to Eastern Illinois University and realize that my continuation at the University depends upon my academic performance and compliance with these terms.

*Follow the recommendations of the Gateway Academic Advisor

* Attend All Classes

* Attending all program and courses necessary for achieving academic success.

I understand that failure to comply with Gateway guidelines could result in my name being submitted to the Gateway Advisory Committee and ultimate dismissal from the program and thereby, the University.

Student Signature _____ Date

Academic Advisor Signature _____ Date

**GATEWAY PROGRAM
EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

AUTHORIZATION TO EXCHANGE OR REQUEST INFORMATION

Student information is confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. 1232g. Therefore, your authorization is necessary to permit (a) the release of information concerning your academic progress to your parent(s), guardian, or designee and (b) to seek information about your academic progress from teachers and/or other university officials.

The Authorization to Exchange/Request Information is for the above stated purpose.

I, _____ hereby authorize the Gateway Program at Eastern Illinois University to contact either or both my parent(s)/guardian and teachers to exchange/request academic information.

I understand that this authorization is being used to allow my advisor and my parent(s)/guardian or teachers to communicate and work together.

I understand that I have a right to be told what information was exchanged.

I understand that this authorization will be valid until I am formally released from the Gateway Program.

Signature of Student

Signature(s) of Parent(s)/Guardian

Date

**GATEWAY PROGRAM
PLEDGE AGREEMENT**

I agree to the following condition while in the Gateway Program:

I WILL NOT PLEDGE OR PARTICIPATE IN ANY GREEK MEMBERSHIP
INTAKE PROCESS, SWEETHEARTS, NOR ANY LITTLE SISTER/LITTLE
BROTHER ORGANIZATIONS.

Student Signature _____

Date _____

Parent Signature _____

Date _____